Declassified in Part - Sanitized Copy Approved for Release 2012/01/05 : CIA-RDP90-00965R000100280003-1

ARTICLE APPEARED ON PAGE A-D

WASHINGTON TIMES
20 October 1986

STAT

ELMO ZUMWALT/WORTH BAGLEY

Covert double standards

A few days ago, a C-123 transport plane carrying weapons to the Nicaraguan "contras" was shot down by Sandinista forces. Of the four-man crew of the aircraft, only one — Eugene Hasenfus — was able to parachute to safety.

Quickly captured by government forces, Mr. Hasenfus was paraded in front of the press to profess his involvement in resupplying the "contras" as a private citizen, as well as the clandestine involvement of the U.S. government in Nicaragua's affairs.

While questions remain concerning actual participation by the Reagan administration in the operation, as opposed to mere tacit approval of it, some observations in the aftermath of this latest crisis may be worth making.

• Critics protesting the involvement of private citizens in such activities, which permit them to affect U.S. foreign policy, are already calling for legislative prohibitions to curtail such activities in the future, as current laws are not specifically on point.

If that is the true intent of the critics, fairness dictates that any new legislation also would prohibit "self-appointed" ambassadors of goodwill from attempting to direct U.S. foreign policy separate and apart from the duly elected executive branch of our government.

Such legislation would put an end to the kind of rhetoric from the likes of Jesse Jackson, George McGovern, and, most recently, Ted Turner which lends support to Marxist governments.

(Interestingly, while the critics are quick to attack private citizens who support the "contras" in an effort to preserve freedom, there is no similar attack on those private citizens who give support to the Sandinistas in an effort to preserve Communism.)

• The broad-based support by American private citizens of the counterrevolutionary movement in Nicaragua reflects a significant dissatisfaction with this country's ability to deal effectively with the Marxist Sandinista government. Twelve years after the fall of Saigon, the memory of our involvement in Vietnam still lingers in Congress's collective mind. Limited war to deter Communist aggression around the world — even when it is as close to our shores as Nicaragua — is not a viable option.

A covert operation, such as the administration's clandestine effort to topple Col. Muammar Qaddafi's regime prior to the bombing of Tripoli, remains infeasible in view of a growing propensity of U.S. government employees to make unauthorized disclosures of classified information and the propensity of the press to print those disclosures without regard to the consequences.

Private citizens and groups are, therefore, motivated into taking such action — either with or without U.S. government approval.

• One gets the impression from the media that a "covert operation" is a tool utilized by our government alone.

The truth of the matter is that while Congress inhibits, and to some extent, rightly so, the limits to which our covert operations may go, such operations pale by comparison to Soviet-sponsored covert operations around the world. Unrestrained by the legislative bonds that restrict U.S. covert activity, the Kremlin is free to initiate whatever operations it sees as necessary to pursue its global interests.

Such operations have involved bloodshed, including the Soviet-sponsored coup to overthrow the legal government of Afghanistan in order to establish the puppet regime that subsequently "invited" in the Soviet troops which now occupy that nation. (The Kremlin, after moving Soviet forces into Afghanistan, then proceeded to have the puppet leader it had installed in power assassinated.)

Some operations have been very subtle, including the Kremlin's quiet operation of seven large banks in the West and its use of the Western banking system to finance many of these operations by taking billions in Western hard currency deposits in "untied" below-market-rate loans.

It is difficult to determine at what point Congress will be willing to take a stand against Soviet expansionism and make the necessary commitments to preserve freedom around the world.

The stand was not made in earnest in Southeast Asia.

It was not made in Africa.

It is not being made in Latin America.

It is doubtful that it will even be made when the Kremlin's subversion of Mexico (which has already started in the form of clandestine overflights of Mexico's coastline by Soviet aircraft to identify guerrilla insertion points) becomes a stark reality.

Elmo Zumwalt and Worth Bagley, retired Navy admirals, are nationally syndicated columnists.

Declassified in Part - Sanitized Copy Approved for Release 2012/01/05 : CIA-RDP90-00965R000100280003-1